

Creating an Inclusive and Empowered Graduate and Professional Student Community Through the Library

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Introduction

Many academic libraries have recognized the need for outreach as part of strategic planning and are engaged directly with an increasingly diverse community of users. However, a holistic or universal definition of outreach appears elusive. Often born out of traditional public relations and marketing efforts, outreach has progressively become more specialized, directed toward unique and richly diverse communities that, in turn, require more focused and specific access to collections and services. The rising number of graduate student support services centers and units on the academic campus, whose populations range from armed service veterans to international students, has pointed to new opportunities

and roles for the library. Increasingly, academic libraries are positioned at the intersection of the academic classroom and the co-curricular lives of graduate and professional students.

Libraries are at a crossroads. They must not only maintain awareness and acknowledgment of these specialized communities of users but also become both advocates and partners with diverse groups in and out of the classroom. This chapter presents an exploration of the changing physical nature of the academic library, which has warranted an increased need for outreach, as well as how new partnerships and initiatives are effectively re-branding library identities and informing direct engagement efforts with our user communities.

The authors will provide examples of localized outreach and engagement efforts directed toward diverse graduate and professional student populations currently underway at their institution (and nationally) to help identify key roles and new opportunities for library outreach to graduate students.

Through an examination of advocacy and partnership efforts and an ongoing discussion of the changing dynamic of the twenty-first-century library (physical and virtual), the discussion will work toward defining the concept of library outreach at the crossroads—in and out of the classroom. Further discussions of awareness efforts, advocacy programming, and how the twenty-first-century academic library is perceived by diverse graduate student communities will aid in moving beyond a “we know it when we see it” understanding of library outreach. We need to work toward a bi-literal understanding of direct engagement—learning more about our graduate student users while they learn more about us—and we plan to explain how to achieve this goal.

Description of Institution

Indiana University Bloomington’s (IUB) libraries strive to advance the missions of the University at large. IUB is a public research university with an enrollment of more than 40,000 students and firmly committed to service learning and civic engagement. It is evidenced not only by the university mission statement but also throughout countless initiatives and endeavors made by past presidents in a wide array of situations and contexts, perhaps most notably by past president Herman B Wells, but in a strikingly similar vein by current president Michael McRobbie. IUB is part of Campus Compact, a national coalition of more than 950 college and university presidents committed to service learning ideals and implementation. In this chapter, we explore how the library used service learning to advance the greater mission and student engagement with the library.

Outreach/Marketing Problem Addressed

The IUB libraries were compelled by the university missions to conduct specific outreach initiatives to graduate students. Over the course of the past ten years, IUB has reported record enrollment levels of international students. The IUB campus alone enrolled almost 6,000 international students, an increase of almost 5% from the previous year, and a system-wide increase of 70% since 2005. In line with the IU International Strategic Plan, this represents the university's commitment to assuring that IU students and faculty and Indiana citizens and business will have the opportunity to play a decisive role in the global community. In fact, the Institute for International Education ranked IUB eleventh in international student enrollment as part of its Open Doors report on more than 1,200 universities in the US. IU is currently actively recruiting in 25 countries to increase the overall diversity of international students. Further, the new School of Global and International Studies will help cement and anchor this accelerated emphasis on teaching global perspective to students. These initiatives have created new opportunities for the library to engage international graduate students with the library.

Another way the library has reached out to graduate students is through collaboration with LGBTQ+ entities on campus. IUB has a Campus Pride Index five-star rating (out of five), which is an overall indicator of institutional commitment to LGBTQ+-inclusive policy, program, and practice. Indiana University establishes itself as an LGBTQ+-friendly campus by including the phrases sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender identity or expression in its primary non-discrimination statement and Equal Employment Opportunity policy, and including sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in public written statements about diversity and multiculturalism. It also includes LGBTQ+ issues, concerns, and representation in its grievance procedures, housing guidelines, admission application materials, and alumnae materials and publications.

How We Did It

Service Learning

Service learning pedagogy is an important and growing trend in higher education and presents librarians with the unique opportunity to not simply provide a mode of outreach but to become deeply involved at their institutions. Service learning enjoins what students learn in the classroom with real-world problem-solving, giving students direct experience with issues and concepts addressed in the curriculum and with actual situations in which analysis and problem-solving occur in the community.

We now know that the majority of graduate students coming to campus are more civically engaged than their predecessors, and service learning students and are typically more motivated and demonstrate a need to reflect and think critically and have an outlet for applying subject concepts learned in the classroom to the community-at-large. In short, by collaborating with faculty and service learning centers, librarians can strengthen their ties to the curriculum as well as their partnerships with faculty.

The library works alongside the University's Division of Student Affairs, Student Life and Learning, and the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning to further the service learning mission. Graduate courses that employ service learning are far-reaching across disciplines. IUB librarians have been involved in *Books and Beyond*, a collaborative service-learning project that connects library and information science (LIS) graduate students with three unique groups of students from around the world—The Global Village Living-Learning Center at Indiana University (Bloomington, IN, U.S.A.), the Project School and Harmony School (Bloomington, IN, U.S.A.), and the Kabwende Primary School (Kinigi, Rwanda).

Librarians and LIS graduate students serve on the project advisory board as well as serving as mentors for project teams—specifically, the cultural, curricular, and leadership teams. Teaching and Learning librarians and LIS graduate students mentor student leaders on lesson planning, curricula development, engaging with students and peers, committee/group work, among many other areas.

Librarians also engage in e-service learning, which attempts to blend a desire for civic engagement with both the strengths (access) and pitfalls (direct student engagement) of online learning. Online learning is often perceived as having a lack of engagement and interaction that a traditional, in-person course could afford. Incorporating service learning into this environment would help mitigate this shortfall at a very base level but instead creates an educational symbiosis, merging course content, student engagement, and civic education within a virtual environment.

International Students

International students are one of the largest user communities for the libraries. Jackson and Sullivan (2011) point to the rise in international students on university campuses in the United States, bringing with them a unique set of skills and insight, while acknowledging:

Libraries play a critical role in connecting these foreign students not only to our universities and colleges, but also to the information literacy skills they will need to succeed. Many students have not previously had librarians available to assist with their research. They are often unaware of library resources and services, and unfamiliar with academic jargon and Western library systems. It is

therefore critical that we clarify the role that librarians can play in their educational careers. (p. vii)

At IUB, outreach and engagement efforts with the international graduate student community have taken many forms and have proved quite successful. While some early initiatives proved too time- and staff-intensive to maintain, such as multilingual audio tours of the central library, others have grown over time and have proven both sustainable and effective.

During the academic school year, librarians regularly schedule and host workshops specifically for international graduate students in the library. Libraries partner not only with the Office of International Services but with many other campus units that provide outreach to international students. One workshop called *Strategies for Preparing International Students for Job Interviews in the U.S.* was tailored for international graduate students and focused on techniques for job interviews, what employers look for when interviewing applicants, and how to make a good impression. In addition to mock interviews, participants had a chance to ask questions and learn from the experts.

Workshops with partners included:

- Making Sense of the U.S. Classroom (Counseling and Psychological Services)
- Managing Time Efficiently and Avoiding Procrastination (Communication and Culture Department)
- Defensive Driving: Tips for Safe Winter Driving (IU Police Department)
- Speaking Up, Out... and In: Getting Comfortable in Class (Communication and Culture Department)

The library held many other workshops to engage international students, such as:

- Decoding the Code of Student Rights, Responsibility, and Conduct—What You Need to Know
- Writing Workshop for International Students
- Managing Academic Stress
- Cultural Transition/Adaptation & Transition
- Tips for Successful Public Speaking In English. One workshop, Speaking One's Piece: Developing Personal Aptitudes in Public Speaking
- What is Critical Thinking in the American Academic Context
- Exploration of Co-Curricular Education and Value of Out of Classroom Learning Experiences
- Safe Driving in Snow and Ice
- What You Need to Know About Finding an Internship
- Teamwork and Group Assignments
- Conquer Procrastination

Another outreach program is The International Chef Series which is hosted by the Indiana Memorial Union Dining Services. This series features an award-winning

chef preparing an authentic dish from one of the many countries represented within the IU international student population.

Dating can be an exciting part of the college experience. However, the nature of dating relationships might be different and sometimes confusing when you're an international student who comes to the US from another culture. During the Do You Have a Date? Myths and Facts about the Cultural Differences in Dating workshop, all participants are welcomed to have an open discussion about the cultural differences in dating based their observations and experiences. It also highlighted the importance of giving and receiving consent in sexual practices and coach students to become informed partners with regard to the cultural nuances.

Library outreach efforts to cultural centers with graduate student populations are not limited to the campus but extend to the greater community. The libraries work with the Asian Culture Center, First Nationals Educational and Cultural Center, Helene G. Simon Hillel Center, Islamic Center, Latino Cultural Center (La Casa), Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center, and many others. Outreach and engagement efforts with these centers include hosting graduate student information resource fairs in the library lobby, attending outreach and cultural events held on campus, in the community, or at the representative cultural centers (often hosting information tables), or simply partnering in the process by either offering support in name or financially when possible.

One aspect of the IUB Libraries' outreach efforts to international graduate students that has perhaps had the highest impact has centered on New International Student Orientation. Librarians have been centrally involved in the planning and implementation of new directions in new graduate student orientation—serving on a campus-level advisory board that was established to reimagine the summer orientation as well as enjoin it with the domestic new student orientation in ways not previously done. A byproduct of these efforts has seen increased use of library space for orientation events, such as informational resource fairs for new international graduate students as well as traditional Welcome Week events that include late-night programming for new students. The libraries are also involved in the development of pre-arrival resources for new international graduate students, providing opportunities for distributing information about library resources and services to both incoming and prospective international students before they arrive on campus.

LGBTQ+ Students

The IUB Libraries strive to acknowledge the diversity and strengths of its graduate student patron base while being inclusive and mindful of each populations' unique needs. Part of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs, the LGBTQ+ Culture Center works with the other cultural centers and campus offices to create a positive and welcoming environment for all students.

An integral connection between the LGBTQ+ Culture Center and the IUB Libraries was the establishment of the LGBTQ+ Library which contains materials pertaining to asexual, bisexual, gay, intersex, lesbian, transgender, and queer issues. The library's resources include books, videos, CDs, and periodicals for both research and entertainment. It provides lending services to not simply the campus but the entire community. Anyone can become a patron of the LGBTQ+ Library with proper identification.

To be sure, college and university campuses have, over time, improved for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) students. K. L. Clarke (2011) points to the need for "strong, current LGBTIQ collections in academic libraries [as] one way colleges and universities can employ to improve the campus climate.... A strong academic library, with rich collections, supportive and helpful staff, and useful services, can help make a more inclusive campus for LGBTIQ students" (p. 81).

In addition to being responsive and inclusive through the libraries' collection development and programming efforts, the LGBTQ+ Library has provided a valuable opportunity to engage with the campus and greater LGBTIQ community. An LGBTQ+ Library Advisory Committee was established over five years ago to provide support and insight for the daily operation of the library and maintenance of its collections. Each academic year, the LGBTQ+ Culture Center actively recruits and hires graduate student library coordinators in internship positions. These coordinators facilitate much of the daily operation of the library, from purchasing materials for the collection to cataloging, staffing, and providing access to the community. The advisory board meets regularly throughout the school year to provide guidance on these functions as well as outreach and engagement opportunities. The board comprises librarians and staff from all aspects of the library system (reference, teaching and learning, archives, special collections, and branch and cultural center libraries) as well as graduate students.

Perhaps the following reflection on time spent over the course of the past year by one of the graduate student intern coordinators best expresses the value that library outreach efforts have served the greater community:

Despite juggling multiple other jobs ...I have found my position as the LGBTQ+ Library Coordinator to be the most rewarding. Most library positions are eager to train you for single tasks (i.e. [sic], cataloging, reference, etc.), but [LGBTQ+ Culture Center staff members] are constantly encouraging me to tackle a variety of projects that extend beyond my initial expectations. I have had tremendous support in developing the collections by researching underrepresented subjects, familiarizing myself with the gender studies discourse (and its intersections), planning outreach projects (initiating a possible student organization, creating displays and advertisements, and developing a stronger online presence, among many others), administering an evaluation survey, and

so much more. I am especially excited to begin developing a zine collection, which will hopefully be used in conjunction with student interactions. It is fulfilling to know that what I do at the office supports students academically as well as personally. In my youth, I found myself in a position similar to that of some of our patrons, scrambling to find resources in my most desperate times. Working at the office gives me a great sense of pride because I know I am helping to provide a service that many members of our community need. And it goes without saying, but I feel at home at the [LGBTQ+ Culture Center]. I have learned, above all my expected duties as a library coordinator, that a well cultivated space can provide an invaluable sense of comfort and safety. (IU LGBTQ+ Culture Center, 2015, p. 7).

The LGBTQ+ Library graduate student library coordinators have created many resource guides, frequently with the assistance of the librarian for gender studies and in consultation with the advisory board for selected topics that are frequently requested. Guides are downloadable or accessible via the library's web page. Teaching faculty and course instructors may also request that a custom resource guide for specific courses be made by the library coordinator. Research and resource guide topics have included asexuality, faith and same-sex attraction, intersex, lesbian resources, queer populations, history, and important figures, transgender resources, and zines.

The library has collected resources in an array of print and non-print formats, including books, DVDs, CDs, periodicals, and zines. The library advisory board has proved instrumental in providing guidance for collection development and circulation policies and procedures over the past several years. Currently, the library's catalog is not integrated with the IUB Libraries general catalog. It is hoped that this may be a viable option in future; however, at present, after experimenting with a variety of options, patrons may browse the catalog via LibraryThing. The collection includes almost 3,000 items across multiple formats. The library coordinators also provide an assortment of outreach programming throughout the academic year, from open houses to film screenings, lecture series, craft nights, and more. The LGBTQ+ Library, along with the advisory board, has proved integral to connecting the IUB Libraries with the LGBTIQ graduate student community.

Reflection

Ultimately, outreach is part of the much larger process of connecting the patron to the library. At Indiana University Bloomington, librarians have actively sought creative ways to connect to graduate students, aligning the work they do with the campus mission of creating intellectually curious and civically minded global citizens. The outreach and engagement (two terms that are so intertwined as to

be difficult to separate in concept) approaches presented in this chapter represent but a small sampling of the ways in which academic libraries align themselves with the campus mission. It is rewarding when those efforts are reflected, however indirectly, by campus and community partners and serve to reinforce all of the difficult but necessary work that continues on a daily basis. Outreach efforts for academic libraries must not be done without proper context—understanding the needs of a diverse graduate student patron base while staying aligned with the overall mission of the campus and community at large is imperative for successful outreach and continued viability.

References

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